

LESSON 3: USING YOUR LEADERSHIP SKILLS/TAKING CHARGE



*command of
execution
command voice
preparation
procedure*

PURPOSE

This lesson introduces you to how leaders use their leadership skills to prepare themselves for taking charge during drill.

INTRODUCTION

In order for leaders to command respect and obedience from their subordinates, they must be prepared to lead and ready for any situation. Their attitude and appearance must set a good example for others to follow.

Taking charge is not as easy as it sounds. It is not just having a neat and correct appearance, knowing drill commands, or using proper **command voice**; it is being a good follower, a good leader, and knowing how and when to use proven leadership techniques (such as the traits and principles of leadership).

Read the following story and see if you can personally identify with any of the mistakes that Mark made after he took charge of a squad as its new drill leader.

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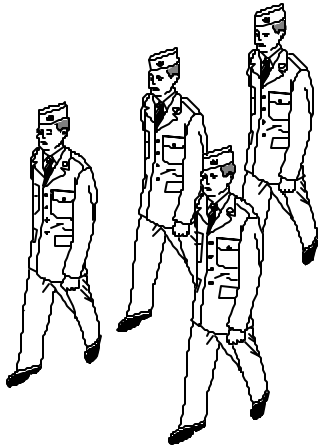
Mark usually arrives late to his JROTC class. As he joins the formation, he always greets several of his buddies. He hardly ever has a straight gigline or a pressed uniform, his hair is usually uncombed, and his shoes look like he never polishes them. Day after day, he goes through the process of trying to call his squad to attention. They barely listen to him, continuing to talk and laugh.

He finally gets their attention and begins drilling them. During the drill, he consistently gives a few wrong commands and makes several timing errors, but his squad members usually execute the drills correctly anyway. Seeing them get ahead of him frustrates Mark, but by that time, the class is over and he does nothing about it.

One day, Mark finally asks a senior cadet, “Why is my squad so hard to keep in line? I can’t get them to shape up. I don’t get angry, I ask them nicely, and I still can’t get any discipline or respect.”

The senior cadet replies, “If you really want an honest answer . . . I think they don’t see you as a leader. You give them the wrong commands; you don’t know correct timing or cadence; and your appearance . . . well, it needs a lot of work. Learn the drills and look like a leader. You can’t inspire respect if you don’t have any for yourself. By the way, when was the last time you polished those shoes?”

In the next few weeks, Mark’s leadership skills and appearance improve. Soon, the squad sees a difference — Mark is becoming a better leader. He knows the drills, looks the part of a leader, and does not tolerate any slacking off once the class period begins.



The mistakes that Mark made as a drill leader include having a poor appearance, not knowing the drills or using the proper command voice, and not being able to discipline his friends. Instead of immediately taking the initiative of a leader or setting the proper examples, he waited until the squad got out of control. Then, he had to make changes. Being a consistent leader may appear to be difficult, but it will make your job easier. How does **procedure** and **preparation** play a role in Mark's situation?

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Drill leaders are also instructors; therefore, they must know how to teach drill movements to their subordinates and to provide remediation. If you become a drill leader, one of the most commonly accepted ways to teach and remediate drill is from a position centered in front of your team. From this position, you can:

- Explain and demonstrate each new drill movement before your team members practice it. Then, have them execute it. Remember to require snap in every movement. Ensure the movement is understood and done correctly by each subordinate before trying another movement. Drill periods are short, so make the most of available time.

- Observe their members carefully to ensure everyone executes the movement correctly.
- Make on-the-spot corrections as necessary. Be prepared to give individual instruction to those personnel who need it. This means knowing exactly what a subordinate did wrong and being able to demonstrate the correct way.

Be prepared to use discipline, as necessary. Junior leaders often find this difficult because the people they discipline are their peers and friends. Do not give discipline for any other reason than to improve the unit, and it is extremely important for that reason. Leaders do not have to feel wrong about enforcing discipline; it should not be personal, but purely professional. Never discipline someone in front of others; instead, take that person someplace private to discuss and correct the behavior. (**Note:** You will receive more instruction on how to properly conduct a counseling session in other levels leadership.)

CONCLUSION

When leaders know their responsibilities and prepare for drill, they will discover that being a drill leader is a lot easier. Their followers will respect and obey them more if they see their leaders as being competent. Keep in mind the leadership traits and other fundamentals of leadership presented in this unit as we summarize a list of responsibilities that good drill leaders should follow:

- Be consistent.
- Be sincere. Show respect and care about the well-being of your subordinates.
- Have energy, patience, and spirit.

- Have military neatness and bearing.
- Follow regulations precisely, as an example for others to follow.
- Be knowledgeable of drill procedures and commands. (ie., **command of execution**)
- Provide feedback or on-the-spot corrections when mistakes are noted.
- Be fair and use judgment when applying discipline.

The above list is not all inclusive. The *Leadership* instruction in subsequent years will expand upon this list as your understanding of leadership and your leadership potential grow and develop. For now, however, remember that when leaders know and apply drill commands and leadership techniques properly, their confidence and motivation build confidence and motivation in their followers.

NOTEBOOK ENTRY

Now that you have studied more about leadership and hopefully have refined some of your leadership skills, indicate in your notebook how your expectations may have changed with regard to your desired leadership progression and the positions that you would like to achieve in JROTC? Indicate in your notebook any new expectations that you have about this course and why they changed. Also, explain what you believe are your strengths and weaknesses in leadership and your feelings about becoming a team and/or drill leader.

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